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SUMMARY

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USES OF STATISTICAL SURVEYS IN THE EVALUATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN AFRICA

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Survey Institute

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No.1279 USES OF STATISTICAL SURVEYS IN THE EVALUATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN AFRICA

H.1.(P.3)

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SUMMARY.

Estimation of agricultural production in Africa is one of the most essential requirements of the plan.

Until now the only available data for African countries have been derived from very rough estimates based on the development of exports, on a few market studies and on the opinions, which are frequently subjective, of heads of Departments.

The necessity of obtaining valid information has led statisticians to try out as far back as 1954 the methods which were used for conducting the world agricultural survey of 1960.

Concerning structural data (obtained in seven African countries), this survey has led to satisfactory results.

On the other hand, developmental data, such as output, and hence, production, have turned out to be very hard to analyse.

A study of the problem makes clear the difficulties which this subject may be expected still to present in future.

It seems desirable, therefore, taking into account the present situation:

1. To accept as valid, for a few years, the structural data obtained by the world survey.

2. To set up at once in the agricultural sectors, "laboratories" (not necessarily very elaborate) for measuring output

   of single crops
   of combined crops (indicating, if possible, the various combinations).

3. To plan a programme of studies capable of cross checking (or possibly mitigating) the inadequate results obtained by direct agricultural experiment.

These studies would consist of:

(a) regional surveys concerning household food consumption;

(b) regional surveys concerning supplies for markets of local interest;

(c) studies on the supplying of large economic centres (large towns in particular);

(d) lastly, improvements to be made in export statistics (foreign trade) under the following headings:

(d)(1) improvement of current statistics as at present gathered;

(d)(2) introduction of inter-territorial check-points, which would eventually become customs posts;

(e) lastly, estimation of trade in the form of surveys made at check-points on the principal roads.

The first method is obviously closer to actual production.

Moreover there is no danger of counting twice.

On the other hand the second series of studies as a whole offers the advantage of allowing the course of production to be followed, its evaluation emerging in fact only as a by-product.

In any case, all these studies are essential.. What has already been accomplished must be used, even if not perfect. As for the rest, it must be planned (according to the means available) over a fairly long period, even if only a rough draft plan can be prepared for a "start", which will become more specific as further information becomes available.

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